

NARSINH MEHTA



APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE



AUTHORITY

"Vaishnava Jana to..." was Gandhiji's favourite bhajan. This verse along with thousands of songs, hymns and bhajans were composed by Narsinh Mehta, the poet of Gujarat. Narsinh was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, and he had complete faith in the Lord. From his early childhood, he had passed on the entire burden of his livelihood to the Lord. He himself was engrossed in composing and singing bhajans, leaving the strains and stresses of domestic life to his Lord.

Today untouchability is punishable under the law. Nevertheless, Harijans (people of the scheduled caste) do not feel secure and are victims of unabashed tyranny. Imagine the plight of these people more than five hundred years back, when a high-caste Hindu had to take a ritualistic bath if the mere shadow of a Harijan fell on him. Narsinh Mehta went to sing hymns in the Harijan locality and dared the wrath of the orthodox society. He was a social reformer with rare courage. The word "Harijan", which Mahatma Gandhi later used for referring to the people of the scheduled caste, was first coined by Narsinh. His aloofness from family life was proverbial. He sang bhajans even as his wife and son breathed their last.

Presented here is the pictorial saga of Narsinh's life, full of dramatic events and amazing anecdotes.

OUR NEXT TITLE :

JASMA
OF THE ODES



NARSINH MEHTA



NARSINH MEHTA WAS THE SON OF A NAGAR *BRAHMAN OF
TALAJA , A SMALL VILLAGE IN SAURASHTRA.

* A SECT OF BRAHMANS

NARSINH WAS BORN DUMB. HIS PARENTS DIED WHEN HE WAS FIVE AND HIS GRAND-MOTHER, JAY KUNVAR, TOOK CARE OF HIM.

WILL THIS BOY NEVER LEARN TO SPEAK?

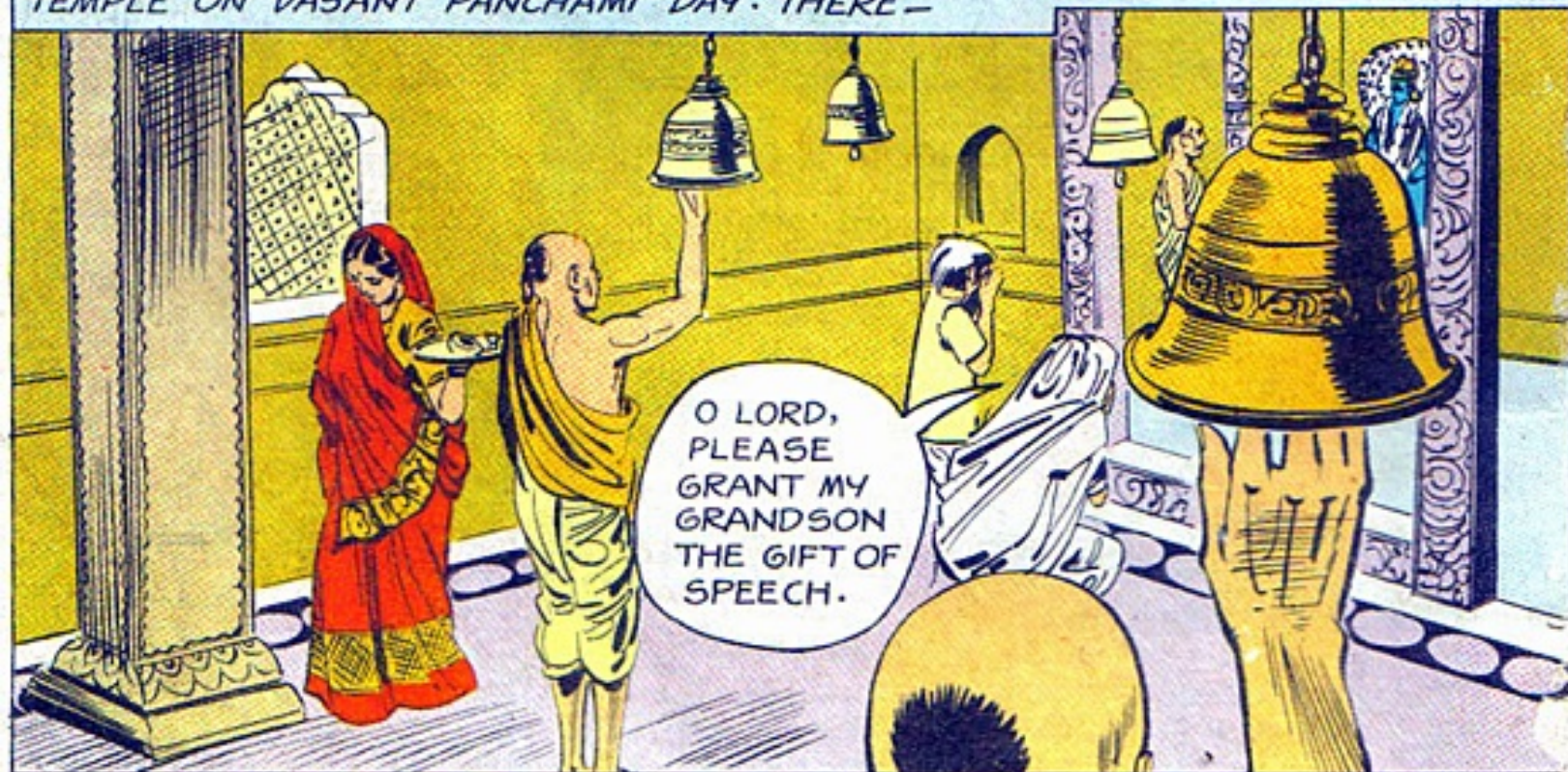


BOYS OF HIS AGE WOULD TEASE HIM.

COME HERE, YOU DUMB FOOL

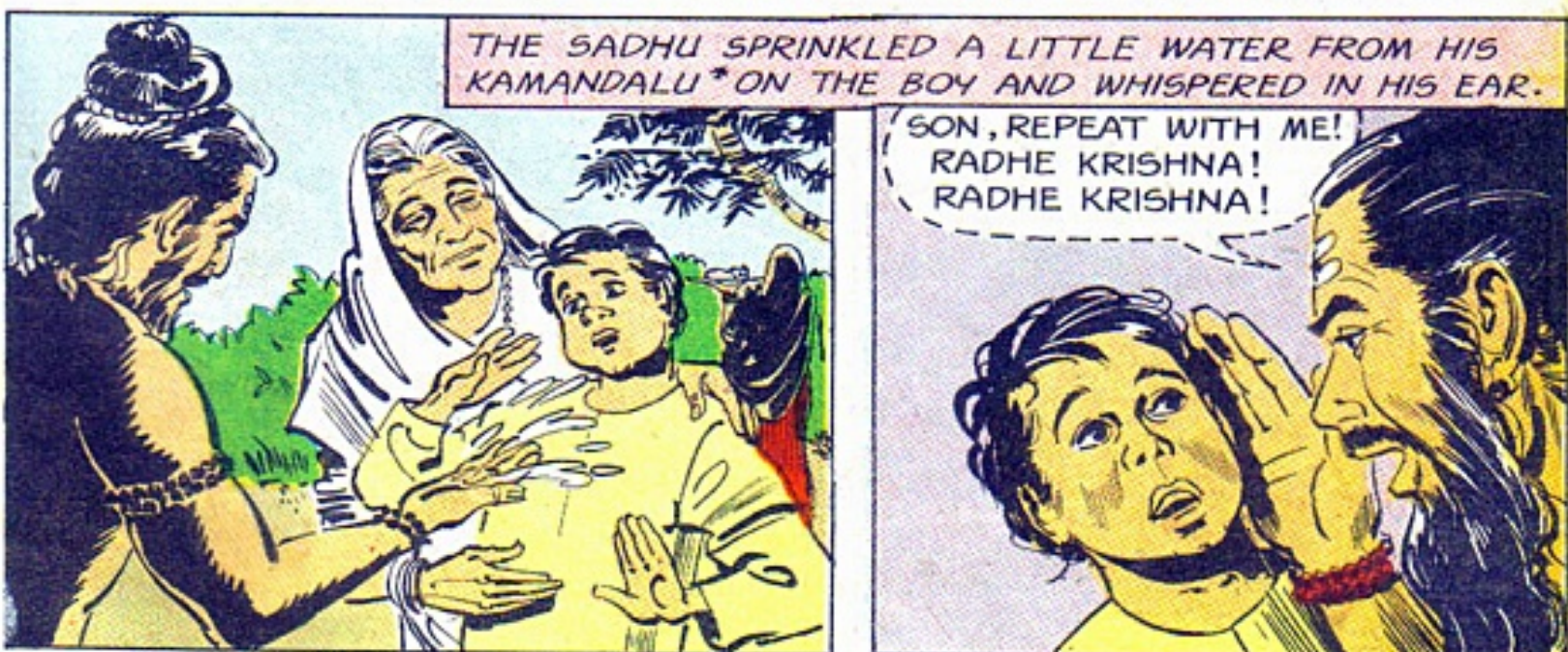


WHEN NARSINH WAS EIGHT, HIS GRANDMOTHER TOOK HIM TO THE LOCAL TEMPLE ON VASANT PANCHAMI* DAY. THERE—



* A SPRING FESTIVAL.

SHE CAME OUT OF THE TEMPLE, THE COMPASSIONATE FACE OF A SADHU CAUGHT HER ATTENTION.



THE SADHU SPRINKLED A LITTLE WATER FROM HIS KAMANDALU * ON THE BOY AND WHISPERED IN HIS EAR.

SON, REPEAT WITH ME!
RADHE KRISHNA!
RADHE KRISHNA!

THE OLD WOMAN LOOKED EXPECT-
ANTLY AT THE CHILD AND LO!

RADHE KRISHNA!
RADHE KRISHNA!

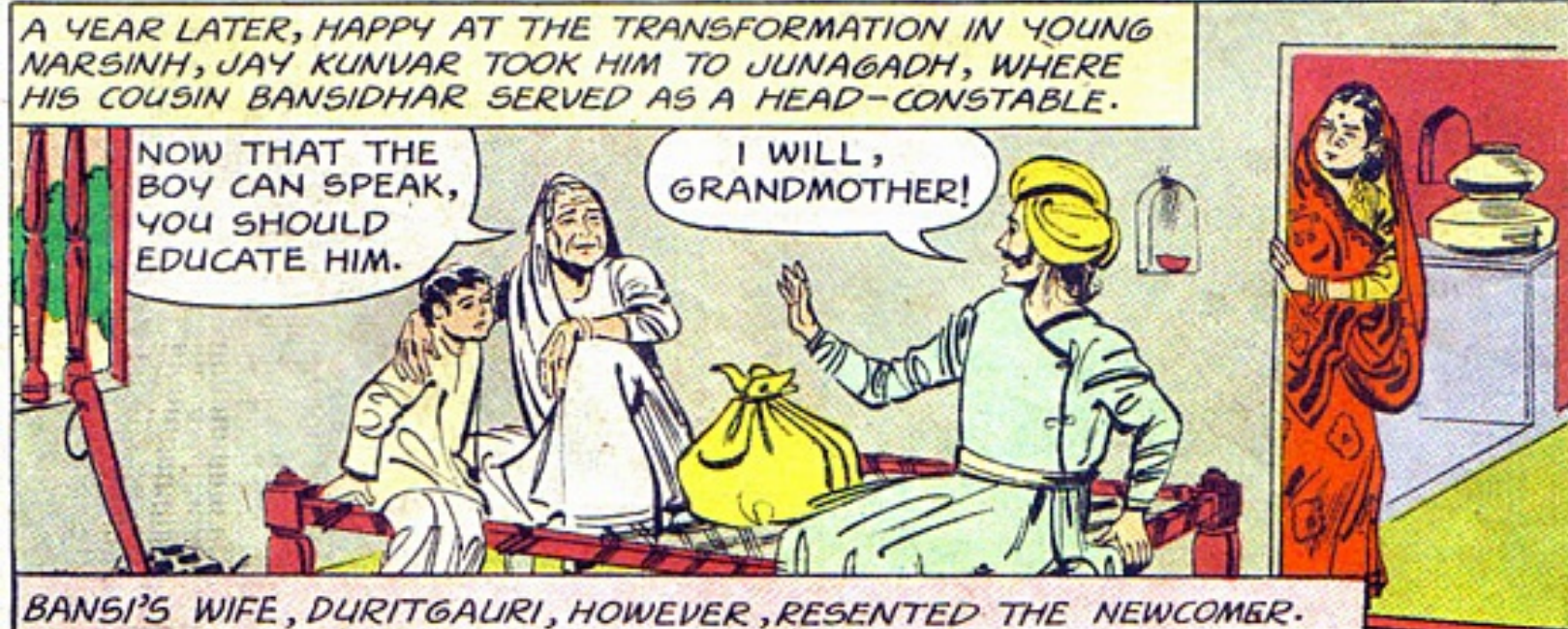
HE CAN SPEAK!
MY GRANDSON
CAN SPEAK!!



A YEAR LATER, HAPPY AT THE TRANSFORMATION IN YOUNG NARSINH, JAY KUNVAR TOOK HIM TO JUNAGADH, WHERE HIS COUSIN BANSIDHAR SERVED AS A HEAD-CONSTABLE.

NOW THAT THE
BOY CAN SPEAK,
YOU SHOULD
EDUCATE HIM.

I WILL,
GRANDMOTHER!



A FEW MONTHS LATER -

BANSI! NARSI IS NEARLY TEN YEARS OLD. IT IS TIME YOU FOUND A SUITABLE BRIDE FOR HIM.



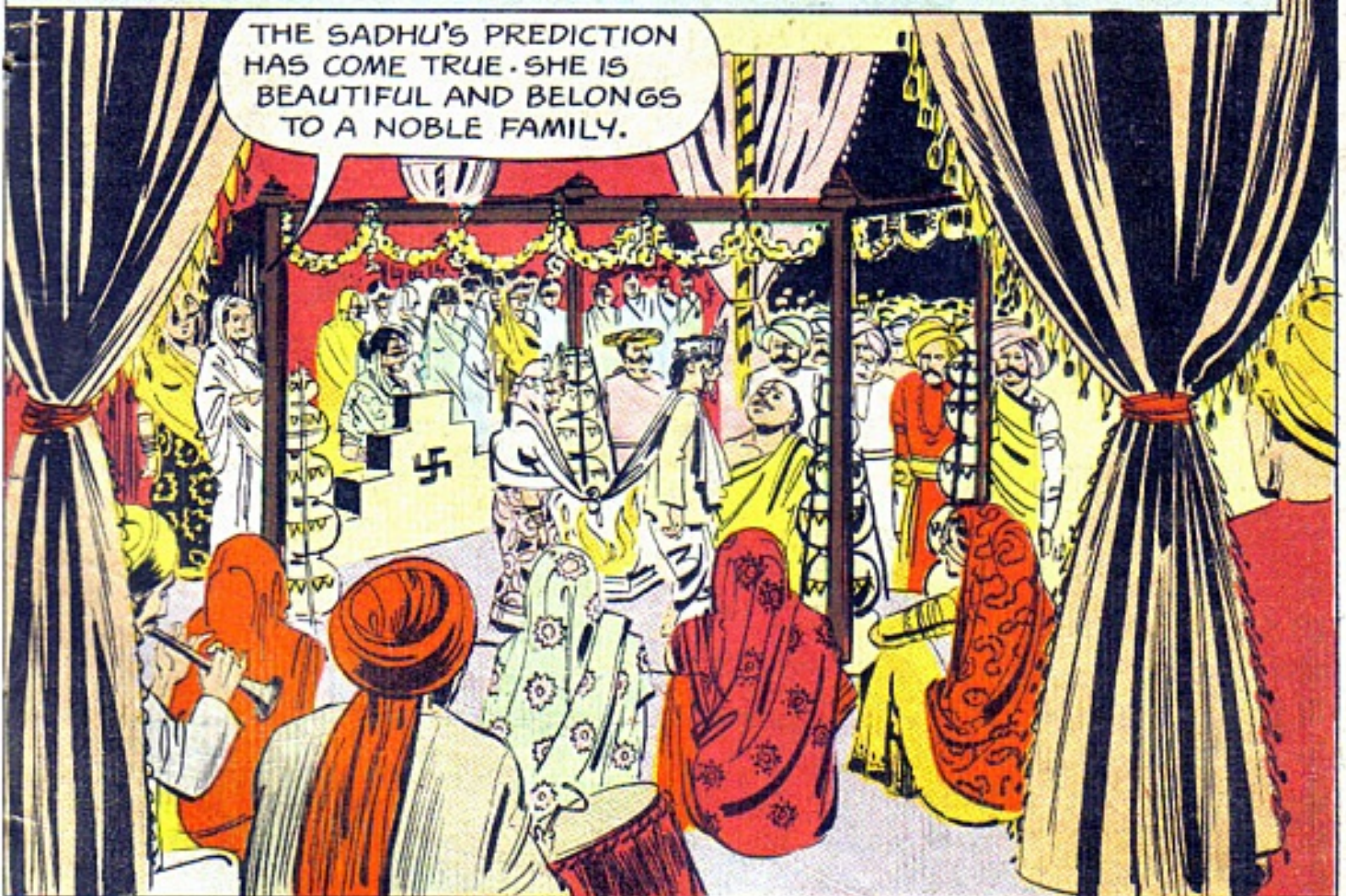
IT'S BEEN BAD ENOUGH HAVING TO FEED THE USE-LESS BOY. NOW THEY WANT TO ADD MORE MOUTHS TO FEED.

HOW CAN A FOOL LIKE HIM RUN A HOUSE-HOLD?

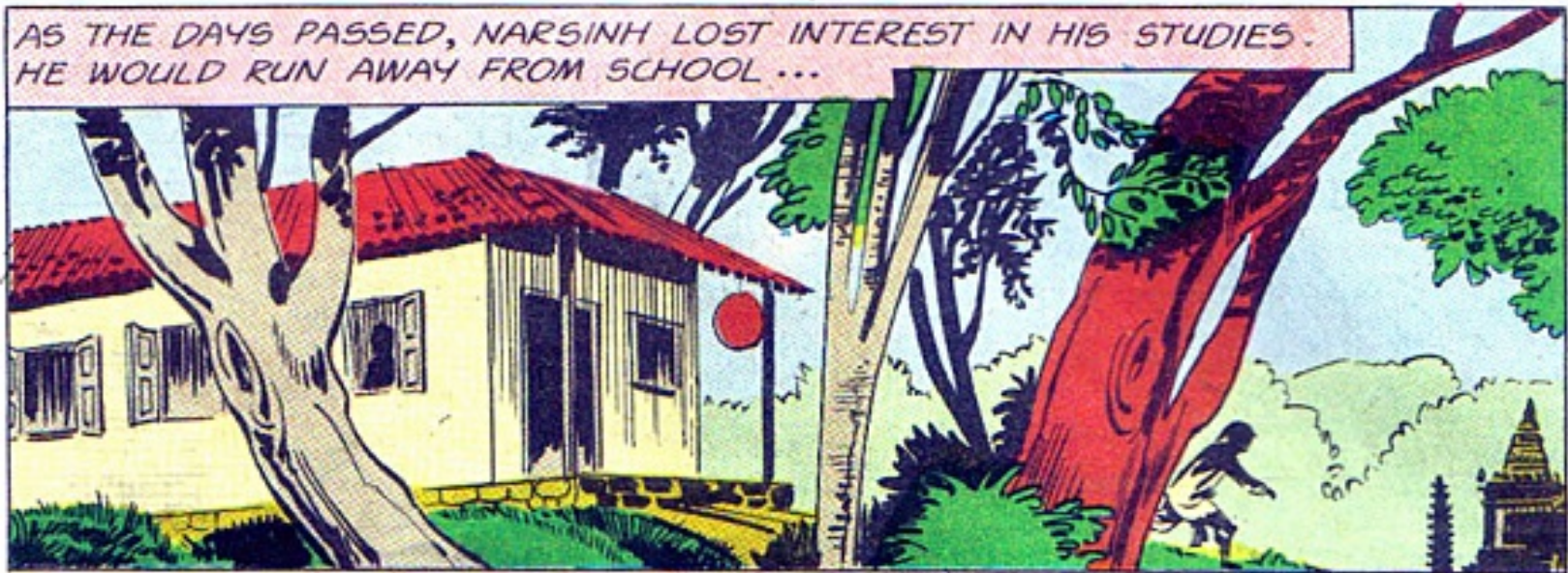


BUT JAY KUNVAR IGNORED HER AND PRODDED BANSI TILL HE FOUND A BRIDE, THE SEVEN-YEAR-OLD MANEKGauri, FOR NARSINH.

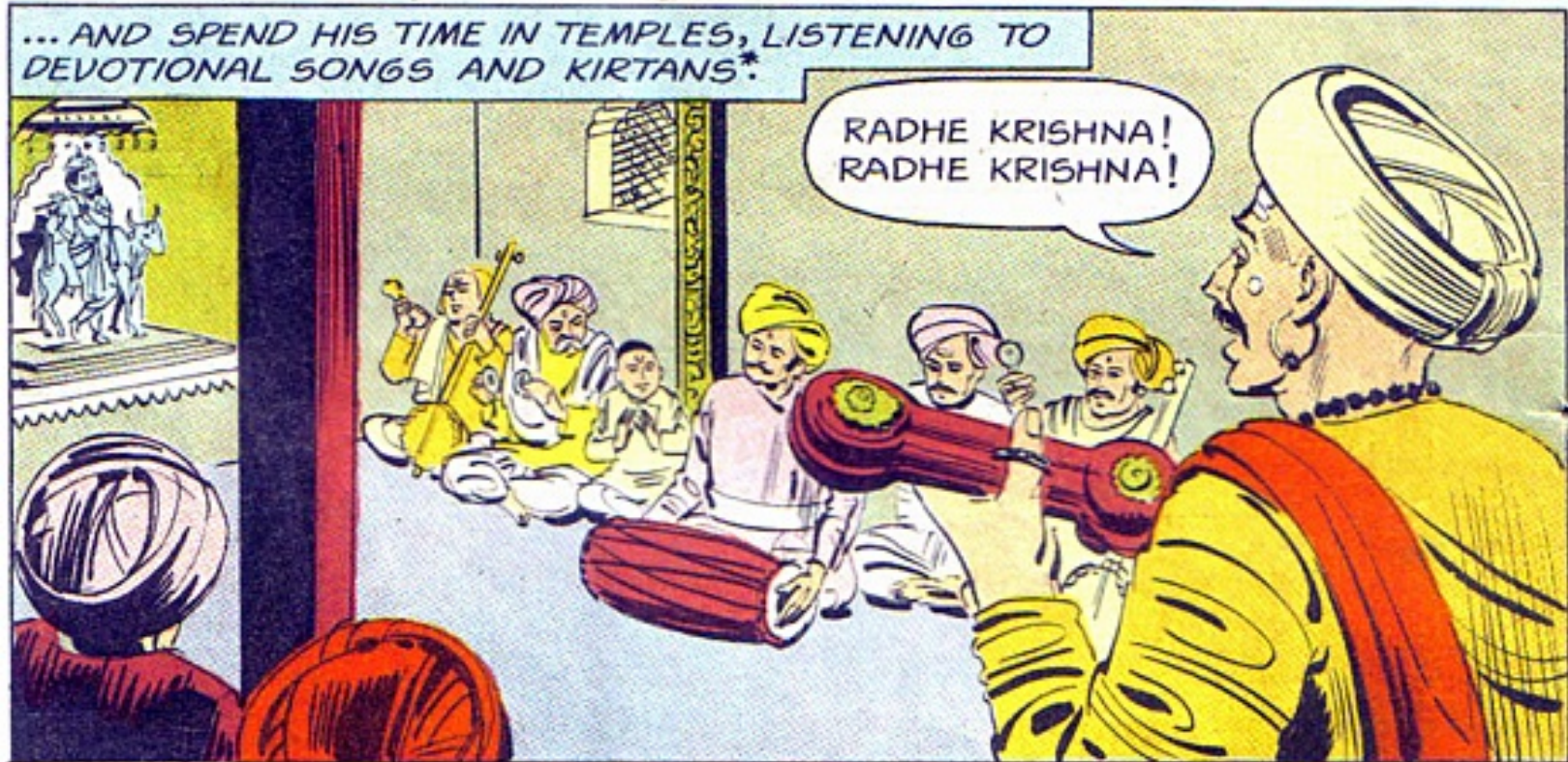
THE SADHU'S PREDICTION HAS COME TRUE. SHE IS BEAUTIFUL AND BELONGS TO A NOBLE FAMILY.



AS THE DAYS PASSED, NARSINH LOST INTEREST IN HIS STUDIES. HE WOULD RUN AWAY FROM SCHOOL ...



... AND SPEND HIS TIME IN TEMPLES, LISTENING TO DEVOTIONAL SONGS AND KIRTANS*.



ONCE, WHEN HE RETURNED HOME AFTER STAYING AWAY FOR THREE DAYS—



*RELIGIOUS STORIES TOLD MOSTLY THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF SONGS

DURITGAURI THREW SOME ROTIS* AT HIM.



MY POOR HUSBAND.
BUT WHAT CAN
I DO? I AM
HELPLESS.



WHEN NARSINH WAS FIFTEEN—



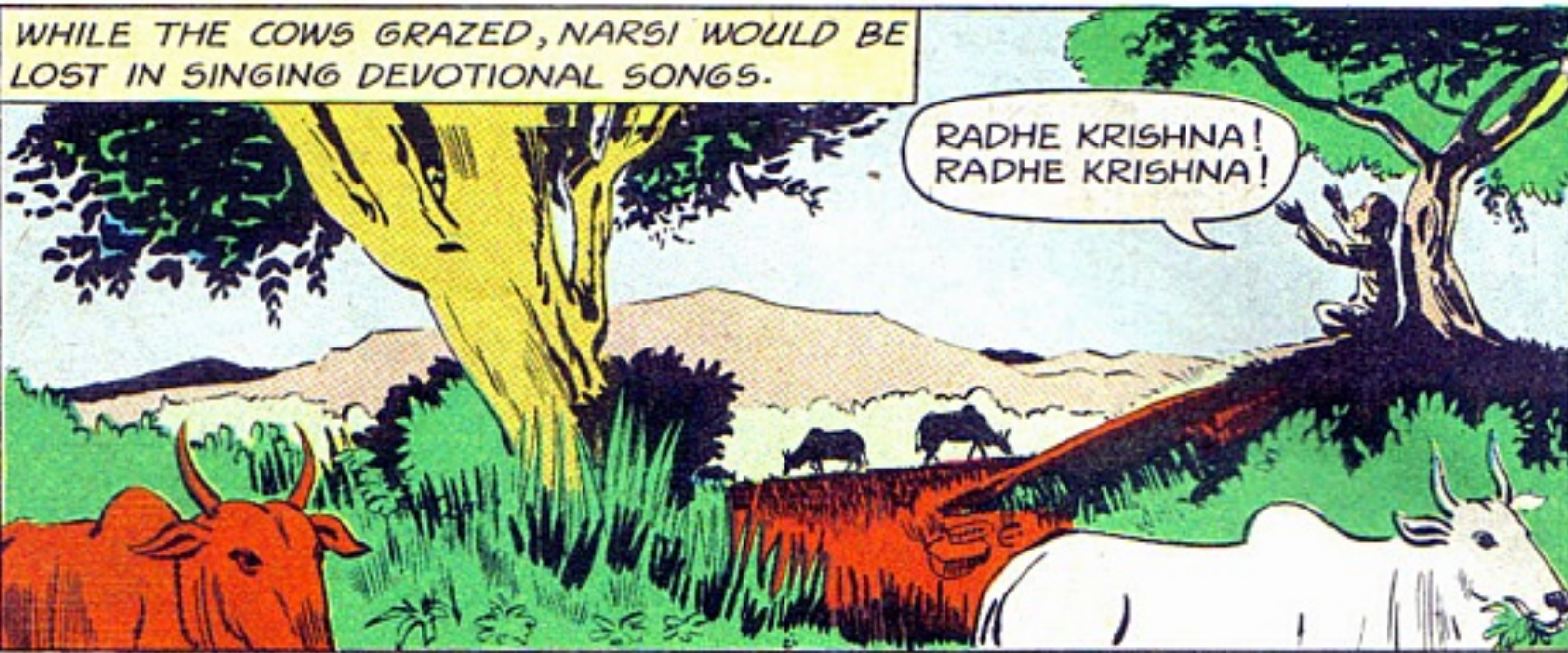
LATER—



* UNLEAVENED BREAD.

WHILE THE COWS GRAZED, NARSI WOULD BE LOST IN SINGING DEVOTIONAL SONGS.

RADHE KRISHNA!
RADHE KRISHNA!



WHEN MANEKG AURI GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER—

LET US NAME HER KUNVERBAI.



THE CHILDLESS DURITGAURI BECAME JEALOUS.

MANEK, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOURSELF TO BE? A QUEEN? EVER SINCE YOU HAD THE CHILD, YOU HAVE STOPPED WORKING. GO WASH THE CLOTHES.



TWO YEARS LATER, A SON WAS BORN TO MANEK.

WE'LL NAME HIM SHAMALDAS.



DURITGAURI COULD NOT BEAR MANEK'S GOOD FORTUNE.



AREN'T YOU ASHAMED THAT YOUR HUSBAND IS A LOAFER? HOW LONG CAN WE CONTINUE TO FEED YOU?



THESE VESSELS ARE NOT CLEAN. CAN'T YOU BE A LITTLE MORE CAREFUL?



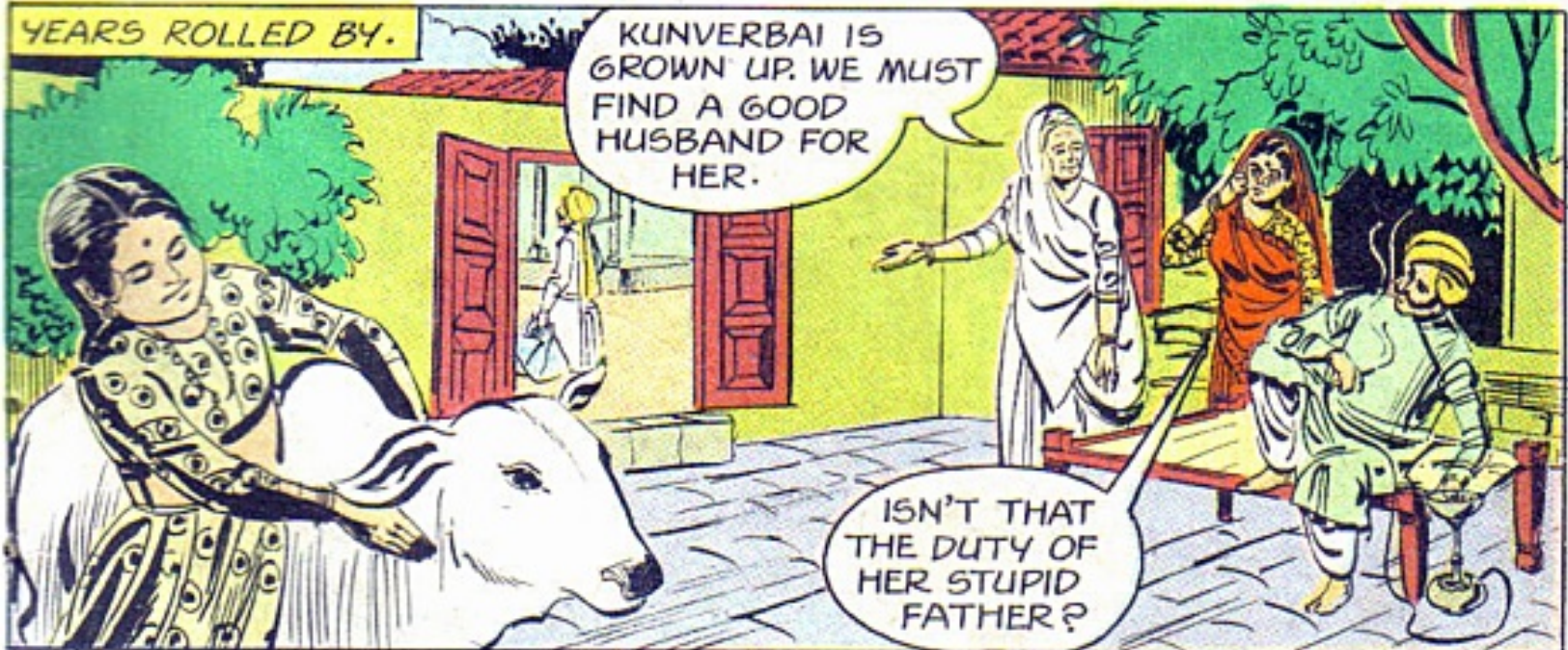
OLD JAY KUNVAR WOULD CONSOLE MANEK.

MANEK, YOU MUST NOT MIND HER WORDS. SHE IS LIKE A MOTHER TO YOU.



YEARS ROLLED BY.

KUNVERBAI IS GROWN UP. WE MUST FIND A GOOD HUSBAND FOR HER.

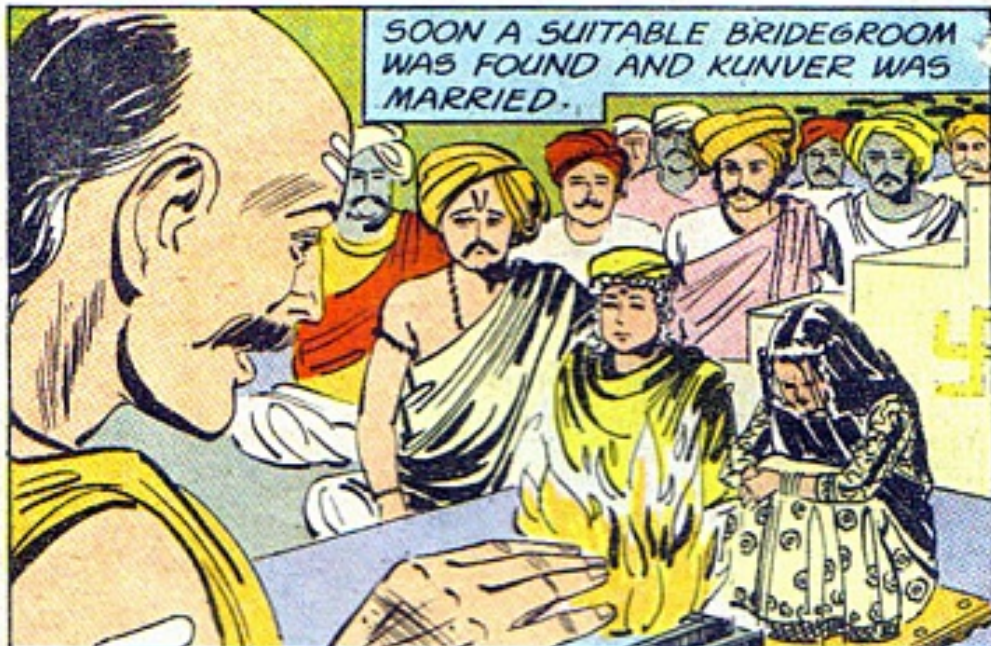


THE OLD WOMAN IGNORED HER AND TURNED TO BANSI.

BANSI, YOU CAN'T LEAVE IT TO A BHAGAT * LIKE NARSI. PLEASE TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND GET KUNVER MARRIED. DON'T WORRY, I WILL.



SOON A SUITABLE BRIDEGROOM WAS FOUND AND KUNVER WAS MARRIED.



JAY KUNVAR, NARSINH'S GRANDMOTHER, DIED SOON AFTER THE WEDDING. ONE EVENING —



BHABHI,* I AM HUNGRY.

SHAME ON YOU. YOU LOAF ABOUT ALL DAY AND COME HOME ONLY TO ASK FOR FOOD.

BUT BHABHI,* I HAVE BEEN WORKING. I HAVE CUT ENOUGH GRASS TO FEED OUR HORSES AND COWS FOR THREE DAYS.



DURITGAURI THREW A STALE ROTI INTO NARSI'S PLATE.



THIS IS ALL YOU WILL GET.



UNABLE TO BEAR SUCH JIBES, NARSINH LEFT THE HOUSE...



...AND WALKED AIMLESSLY FOR ABOUT 20 MILES. THEN, TIRED, HE STRETCHED HIMSELF OUT BELOW A BANYAN TREE. AS HE WONDERED WHAT TO DO, HIS GAZE FELL UPON A TEMPLE IN THE DISTANCE.



HE WALKED UP TO IT AND WENT IN. IT WAS A SHIVA TEMPLE.



A WEEK LATER, A SADHU STOOD BEFORE NARSINH.



I AM PLEASED WITH YOU. ASK FOR A BOON!

HOW FORTUNATE I AM. GIVE ME THAT WHICH YOU PRIZE MOST.

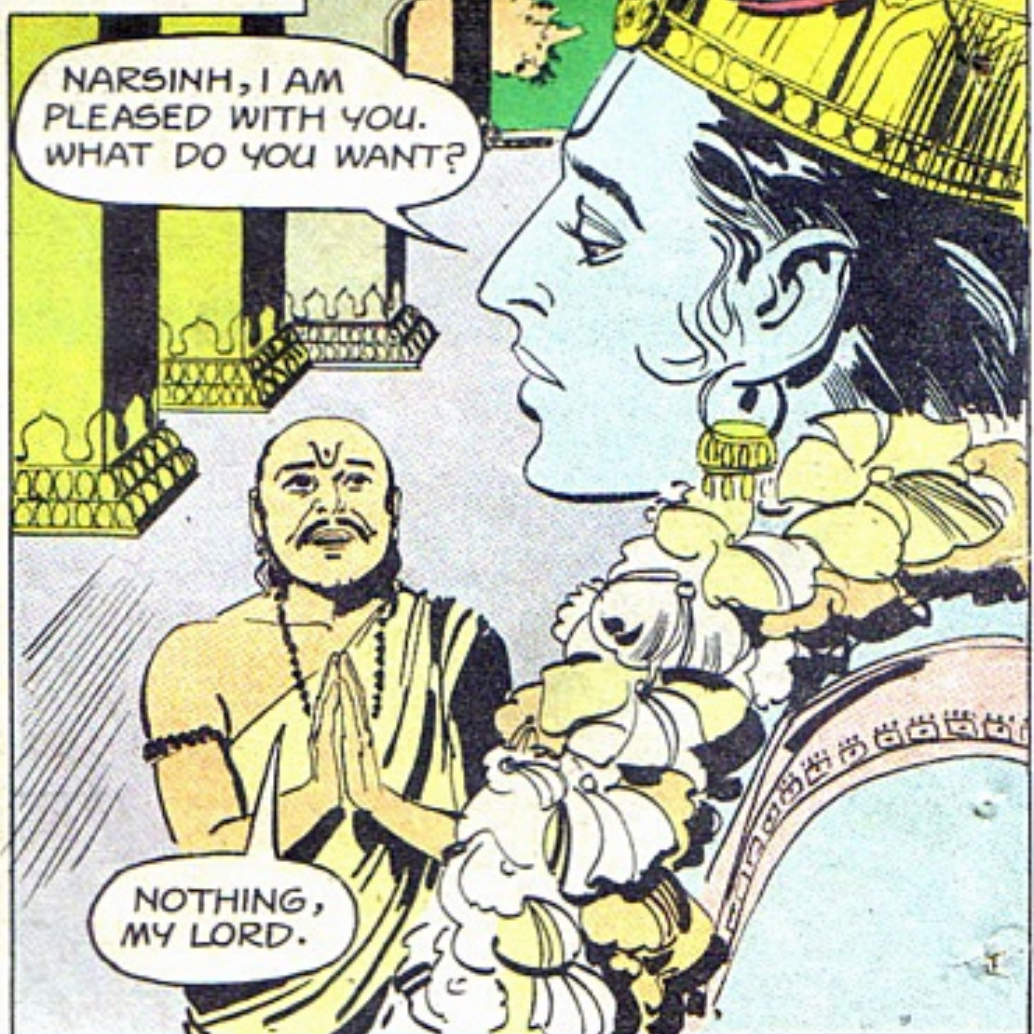


THE SADHU TOOK NARSINH TO LORD KRISHNA'S TEMPLE IN DWARAKA. THERE —



WHAT I VALUE MOST IS A VISION OF LORD KRISHNA. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HIM?

YOU COULD NOT HAVE OFFERED ME A MORE PRECIOUS BOON, MY LORD!



NARSINH, I AM PLEASED WITH YOU. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

NOTHING, MY LORD.

THE SADHU WITH WHOM NARSINH HAD COME WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN. NARSINH STAYED ON IN DWARAKA. ON THE NIGHT OF SHARAD* PURNIMA**



LORD KRISHNA IS DANCING THE RASA® WITH HIS COWHERD FRIENDS! I MUST GO AND JOIN THEM.

AS NARSINH, DRESSED LIKE A COWHERDESS, STOOD NEAR THE DANCERS ...



...KRISHNA APPROACHED HIM.

HOLD THIS TORCH!



THE TORCH BURNT AWAY...



...AND HIS HAND STARTED BURNING, BUT NARSINH WAS SO ENGROSSED THAT HE WAS NOT EVEN CONSCIOUS OF IT.



JUST THEN —

O NARSINH!
YOUR HAND
IS BURNING!

KRISHNA TOUCHED THE BURNT
HAND AND LO! NOT EVEN A
SCAR WAS VISIBLE.

HERE, TAKE THESE KARATALS*
AND GO HOME. WHENEVER
YOU NEED MY HELP, SING
THE KEDAR RAGA** AND
I WILL BE THERE.

WHEN NARSINH RETURNED HOME —

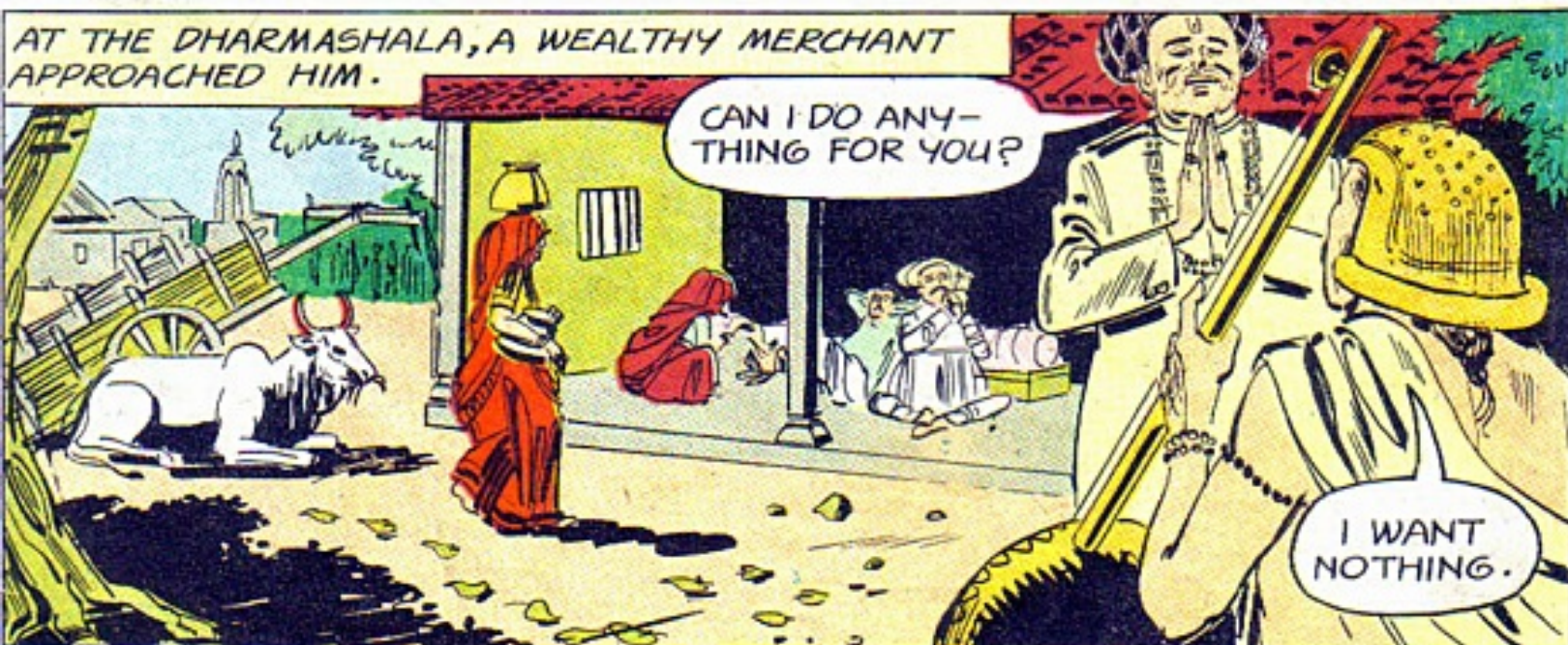
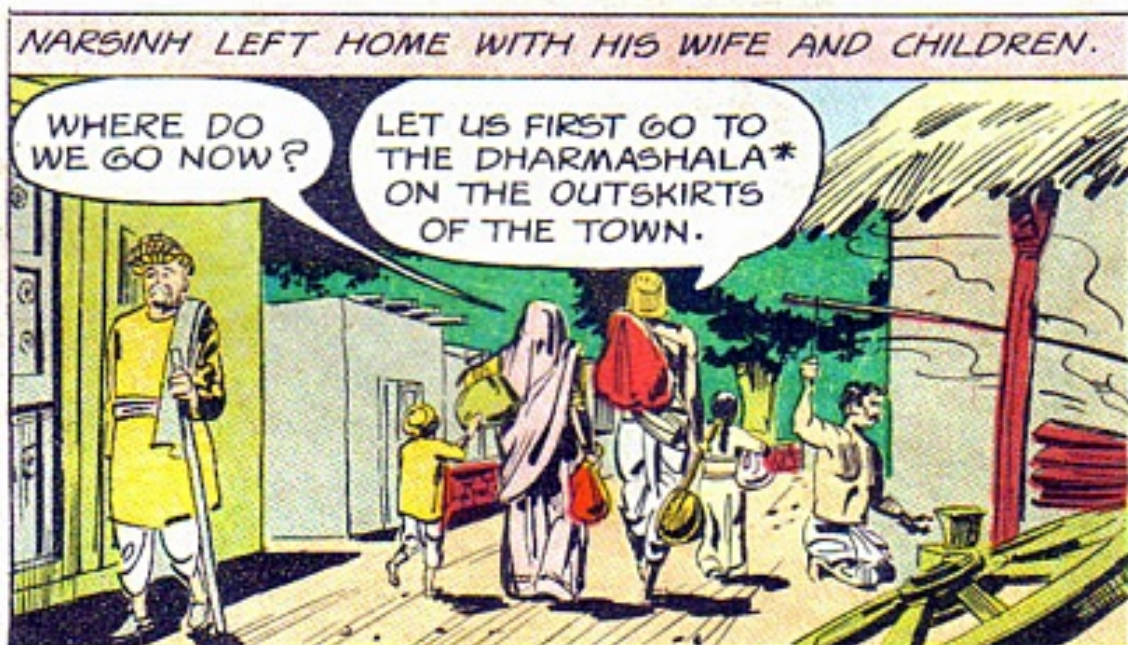
WHERE HAVE
YOU BEEN ALL
THESE DAYS?

I WAS
WITH THE
LORD!

AND NARSINH TOLD HIM ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES AT DWARAKA.

THEY PERFORM
RASA AT DWARAKA
ON EVERY FULL
MOON NIGHT. THE
FOOL THINKS THAT
THE MAN WHO
TOOK THE PART
OF KRISHNA WAS
THE LORD HIMSELF.

BELIEVE ME,
I SAW AND
TALKED TO
LORD KRISH-
NA IN DWARA-
KA.



ISN'T THERE SOMETHING
I CAN DO SO THAT YOU
CAN SING OF LORD
KRISHNA IN PEACE ?

YOU MAY BUILD
A TEMPLE .

AFTER THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT-

PLEASE
USE THIS
MONEY FOR
YOUR
EXPENSES.

SADHUS FLOCKED TO NARSINH'S TEMPLE. HE FED ALL THAT CAME ...

RADHE SHYAM!
RADHE SHYAM!

A FEW DAYS LATER -

A PRIEST HAS
COME TO FETCH
KUNVERBAI TO
HER FATHER-IN-
LAW'S HOUSE.

GOOD.WHY
DO YOU LOOK
WORRIED ?

...AND THE MONEY WAS SOON SPENT.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT WE HAVE TO GIVE ORNAMENTS AND CLOTHES TO HER? THERE IS NO MONEY LEFT IN THE HOUSE.



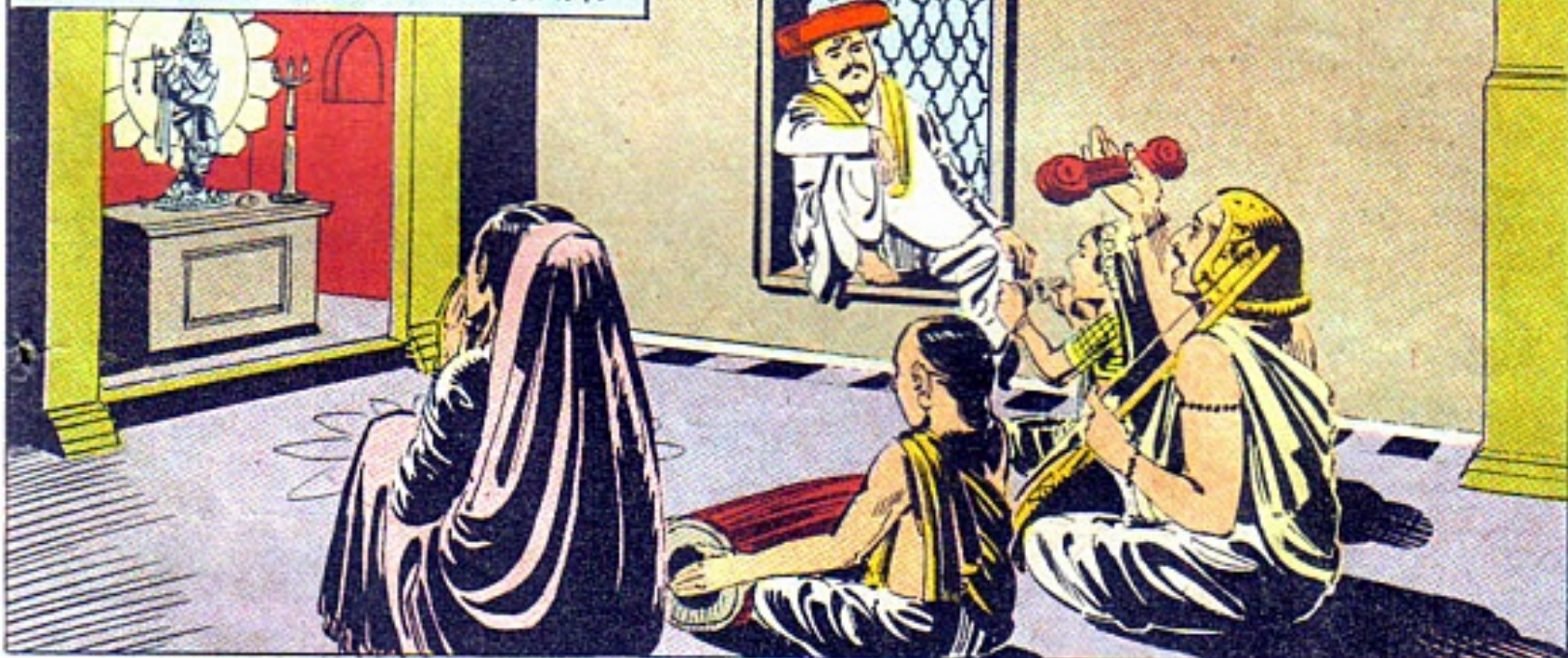
LORD KRISHNA WILL ARRANGE FOR EVERYTHING. LET THE PRIEST WAIT.

THE PRIEST WAITED FOR THREE DAYS. THEN -

WHAT NONSENSE IS THIS? HOW LONG CAN I WAIT HERE? I AM LEAVING TOMORROW.



THAT EVENING, NARSINH PRAYED FERVENTLY TO LORD KRISHNA.



THE AMUSED PRIEST CAME OUT OF THE TEMPLE.

DOES HE REALLY BELIEVE LORD KRISHNA WILL COME AND GIVE HIM MONEY?

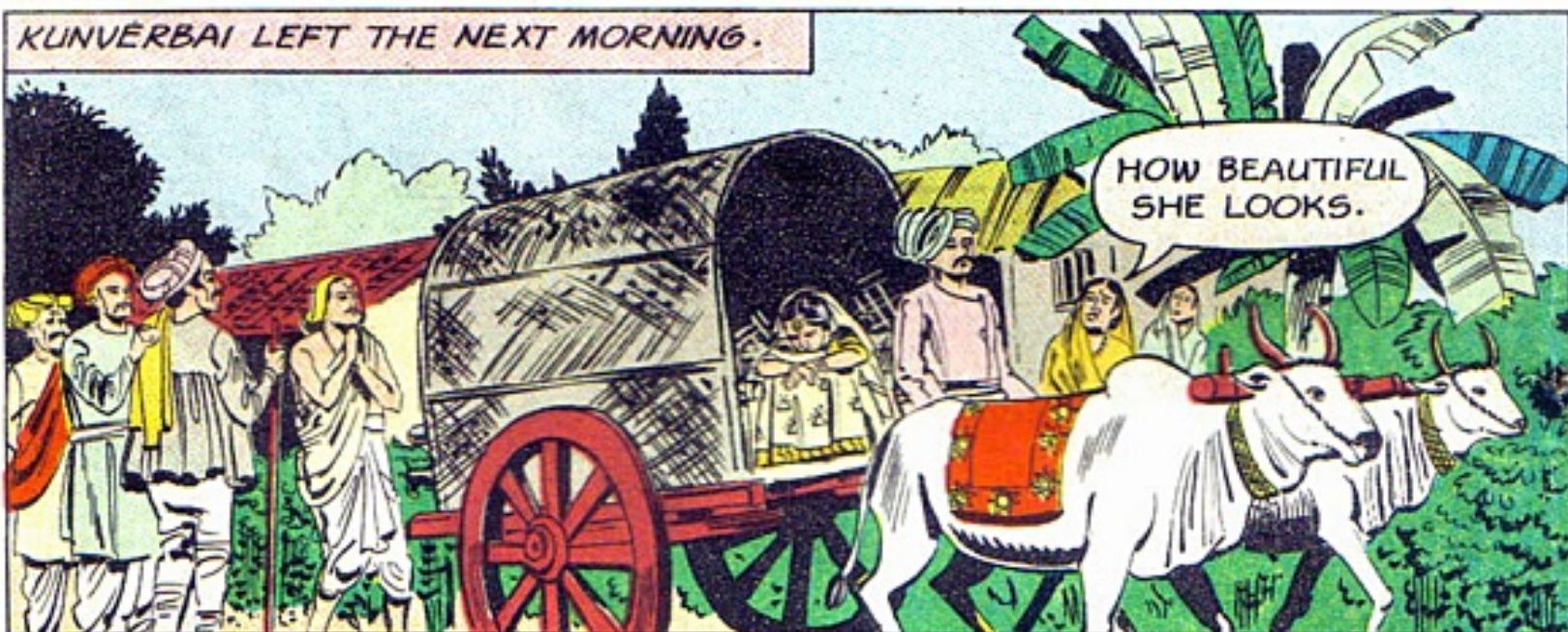
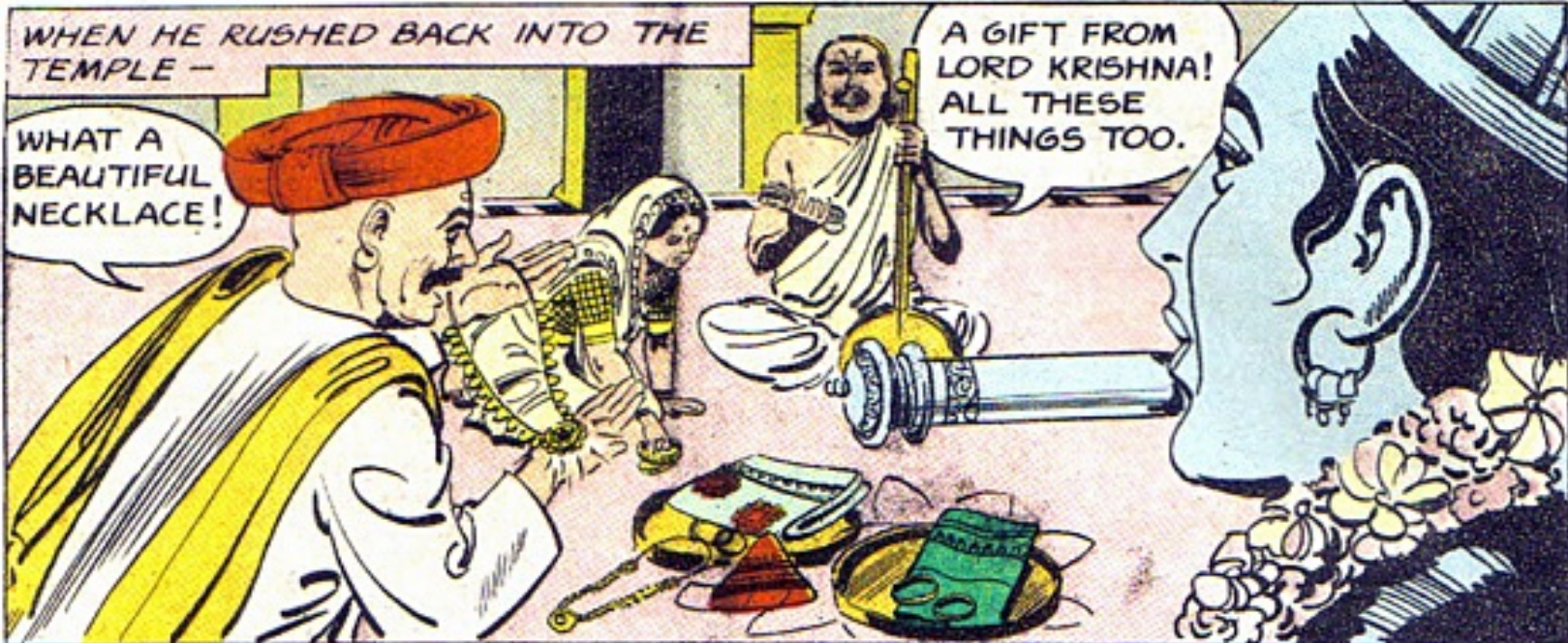


SUDDENLY -

VICTORY TO LORD KRISHNA!



* IN THE DAYS OF CHILD MARRIAGE, THE BRIDE WOULD STAY ON IN HER PARENTS' HOME TILL SHE ATTAINED MATURITY.



THE BRAHMAN, HOWEVER, DID NOT LIKE ANY OF THE BOYS SHOWN TO HIM.



THE NAGARS WERE BY NOW
ANNOYED WITH THE VISITOR.



MONTHS PASSED AFTER THE PROPOSAL WAS ACCEPTED. BUT NARSI MADE NO MOVE TO GET HIS SON MARRIED. THE JEALOUS NAGARS CONSPIRED AGAINST HIM.

SARANG MEHTA SUGGESTS THAT WE WRITE TO MADAN MEHTA.

YES, A GOOD IDEA.

WHEN MADAN MEHTA RECEIVED THE LETTER—

THEY WRITE THAT MY DAUGHTER HAS BEEN ENGAGED TO THE SON OF A PAUPER. HE IS TOO POOR TO AFFORD EVEN THE EXPENSES OF A WEDDING.

A LITTLE LATER—

HERE, GIVE THIS LETTER TO NARSINH MEHTA.

AT JUNAGADH—

WHAT DOES MEHTAJI SAY?

HE SAYS, IF WE DELAY THE WEDDING ANY LONGER, HE MAY HAVE TO BREAK OFF THE ENGAGEMENT.

WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?

WELL, WE WILL GO AHEAD. LORD KRISHNA WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.



ON AN AUSPICIOUS DAY, THE BRIDEGROOM'S PARTY LEFT JUNAGADH.

HA HA! A PROCESSION OF BEGGARS AND SADHUS!

WAIT TILL MADAN MEHTA SEES THIS.



BUT BEFORE THE PROCESSION REACHED THE OUTSKIRTS OF JUNAGADH, ELEPHANTS, HORSES, CHARIOTS, AND WELL-DRESSED MEN JOINED IT IN LARGE NUMBERS. IT WAS LED BY A MERCHANT ON HORSEBACK.



WHEN IT REACHED
VADNAGAR -

WELCOME,
MEHTAJI.
PARDON ME
FOR MY
INTEMPERATE
LETTER.

I AM NOT NARSINH.
I AM BUT A SER-
VANT OF HIS.

A LITTLE LATER, NARSINH
REACHED THE SCENE.

WELCOME, SIR.

SHAMAL'S WEDDING TOOK PLACE WITH GREAT POMP AND CEREMONY.

NOW I KNOW! IT WAS LORD
KRISHNA, IN THE GUISE OF A
MERCHANT, WHO LED THE
PROCESSION.

NARSINH'S TROUBLES, HOWEVER,
WERE NOT OVER. HE LOST HIS
SON. SOME DAYS LATER, HIS
WIFE, TOO, FELL ILL.

I AM NOT FEELING
WELL. CAN'T YOU
STAY AT HOME?

I HAVE BEEN INVITED
TO THE SCAVENGERS'
COLONY. THEY WILL BE DIS-
APPOINTED, IF I DON'T GO.

NARSINH PASSED THE WHOLE
NIGHT SINGING BHAJANS WITH
THE SCAVENGERS.

WHEN HE RETURNED HOME -

ALAS! I AM TOO LATE.



BUT HE SOON RECOVERED FROM THE SHOCK.

THERE IS NONE ONE CAN CALL ONE'S OWN, EXCEPT LORD KRISHNA.



NARSINH'S VISIT TO THE 'SCAVENGERS' COLONY CREATED A FURORE.

HOW COULD NARSINH DO SUCH A THING?

WE MUST EX-COMMUNICATE HIM.



A FEW DAYS LATER, THERE WAS A COMMUNITY DINNER AT A BRAHMAN'S HOUSE.

I WILL COME, IF YOU HAVE NOT INVITED NARSINH.

OF COURSE, I HAVEN'T. HE IS AN OUT-CASTE.

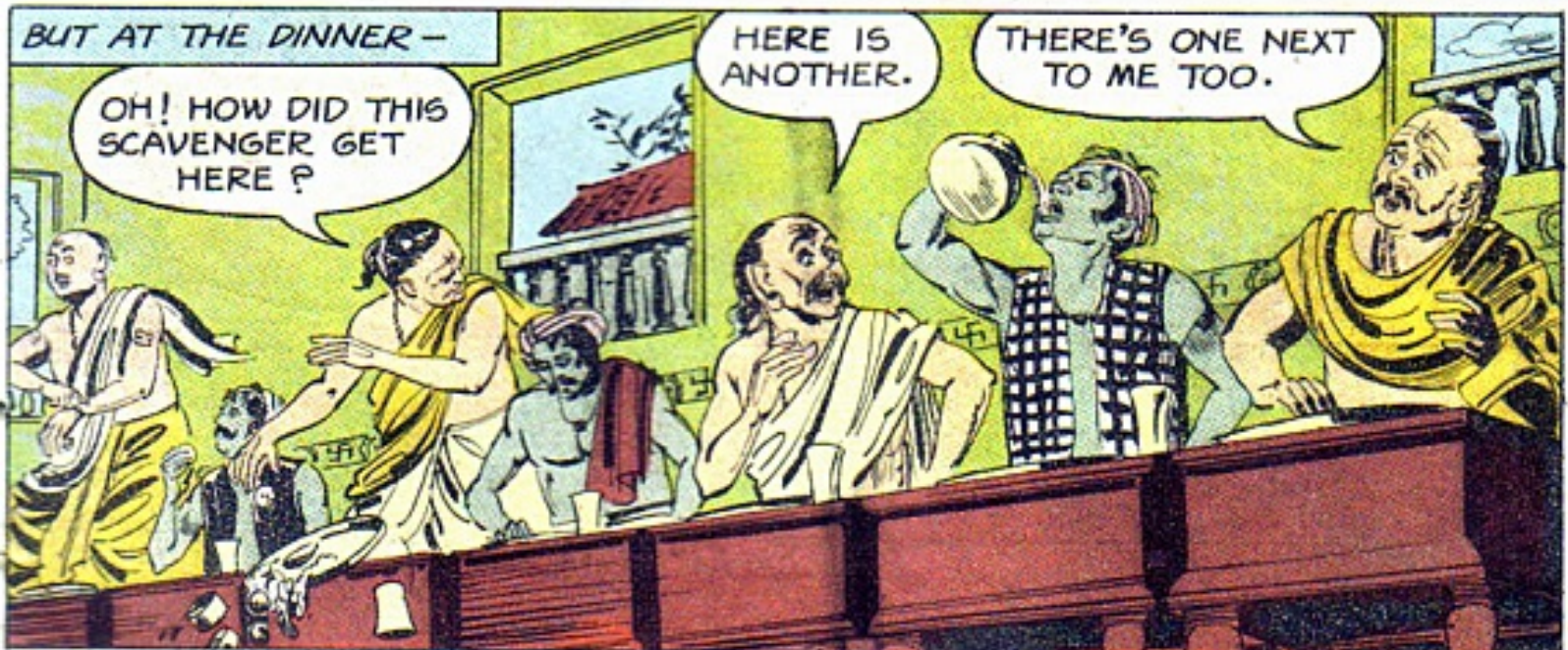


BUT AT THE DINNER -

OH! HOW DID THIS SCAVENGER GET HERE?

HERE IS ANOTHER.

THERE'S ONE NEXT TO ME TOO.



AFRAID OF BEING POLLUTED,
THE NAGARS RAN OUT.



WE ARE
REAPING THE
FRUITS OF OUR
ACTION AGAINST
NARSINH.

THEY WENT TO NARSINH -



FORGIVE US!
WE ARE SORRY
WE EX-COMMUNICA-
TED YOU.

A YEAR AFTER MANEK'S DEATH -



TOMORROW IS YOUR
WIFE'S DEATH ANNIVER-
SARY. YOU MUST FEED
THE COMMUNITY AS IS
THE CUSTOM.

I CAN'T
AFFORD IT.

IF YOU DON'T,
HER SOUL WILL
NOT KNOW
PEACE.



BUT...
BUT...

AT THAT MOMENT A PARTY OF PILGRIMS, SINGING
OF KRISHNA, REACHED JUNAGADH.



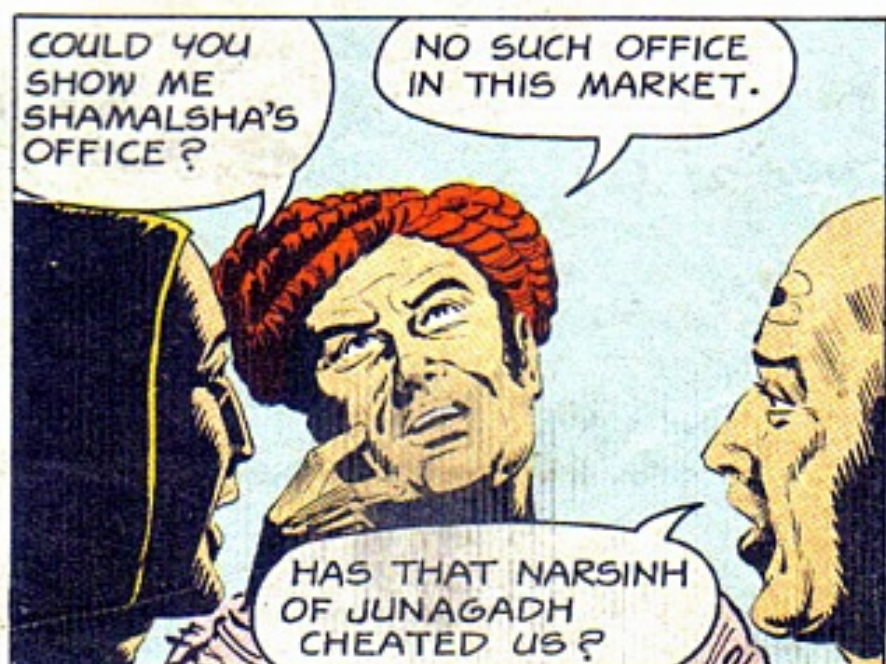
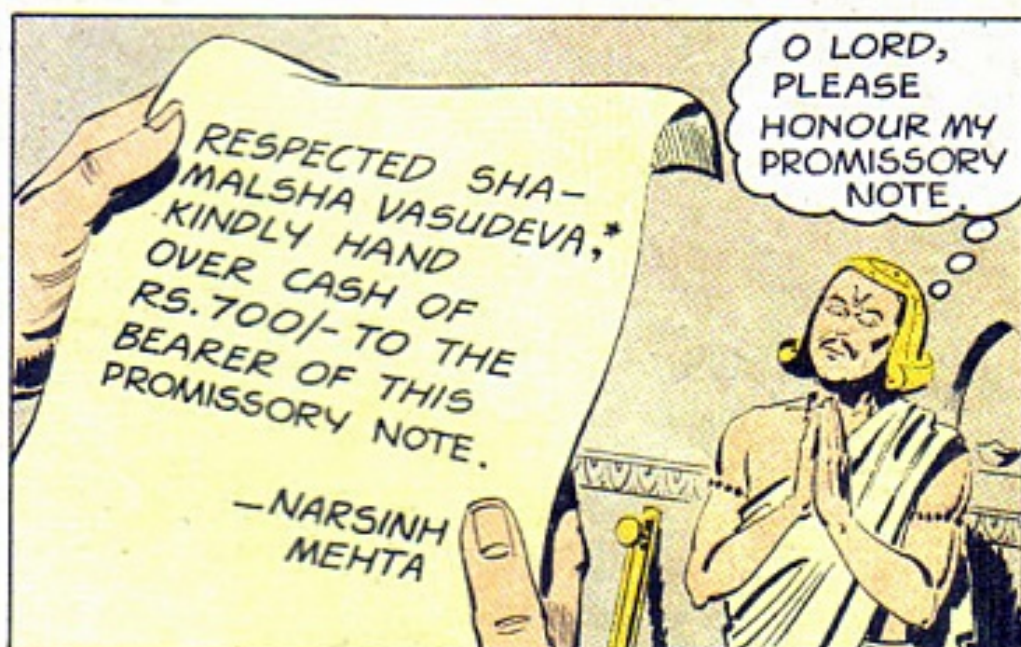
WE ARE ON OUR
WAY TO DWARAKA.
WHO WILL TAKE OUR
CASH AND GIVE US
A PROMISSORY
NOTE?

GO TO NARSINH.
HE IS A RICH MAN
AND HAS BUSINESS
CONNECTIONS IN
DWARAKA TOO.

AT NARSINH'S HOME -

WILL YOU ACCEPT RS.700/-
AND GIVE US A PROMISSORY
NOTE WHICH I CAN ENCASH
AT DWARAKA?

LORD KRISHNA
MUST HAVE SENT
THE MONEY FOR
TOMORROW'S
EXPENSES.



* LORD KRISHNA.

I AM TIRED.

LET US SEARCH FOR THE PLACE TO-MORROW.

THE NEXT DAY-

LOOK! SHAMAL-SHA'S OFFICE!

शामलशा शराई

LET US GO IN.

AT SHAMALSHA'S OFFICE -

HERE, SETHJI, PLEASE HONOUR THIS PROMIS-SORY NOTE!

OH, THIS IS SIGNED BY OUR NAR-SINH MEHTA. HERE IS YOUR MONEY.

LORD KRISHNA HAD HEARD NARSINH'S PLEA.

NARSINH WAS NOT A CHEAT AFTER ALL.

MEANWHILE AT UNA, KUNVERBAI'S MOTHER-IN-LAW PLANNED TO CELEBRATE HER SEEMANT.*

WON'T YOU PLEASE CALL MY FATHER?

WHAT GOOD WILL THAT DO? HE IS A PAUPER. ANYWAY, I WILL INVITE HIM, IF YOU WISH.

* A CUSTOMARY RITE TO CELEBRATE THE FIRST PREGNANCY AT WHICH THE 26
GROOM'S FATHER HAS TO BE PRESENT WITH COSTLY GIFTS FOR HIS DAUGHTER.

NARSINH ARRIVED AT UNA IN A CART DRAWN BY FAMISHED BULLOCKS. A FEW SADHUS WERE WITH HIM.

WELCOME, FATHER. WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

HARIJANS, THE PEOPLE OF LORD KRISHNA. NO ONE ELSE WAS PREPARED TO COME WITH ME.



WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT FOR MY IN-LAWS?

NOTHING.

DON'T YOU KNOW IT IS CUSTOMARY ON AN OCCASION LIKE THIS TO GIVE AWAY GIFTS TO THE IN-LAWS? I FEEL MISERABLE.



DON'T WORRY, MY CHILD.



NARSINH AND HIS PARTY WERE GIVEN ROOMS TO STAY. THERE TOO THEY STARTED SINGING BHAJANS.

RADHE KRISHNA!



THE NEXT MORNING - HERE! HOT WATER FOR YOUR BATH.

IT IS TOO HOT. PLEASE GIVE ME SOME COLD WATER.



YOU CLAIM TO BE A BHAGAT. PRAY FOR RAIN AND GET YOUR COLD WATER.



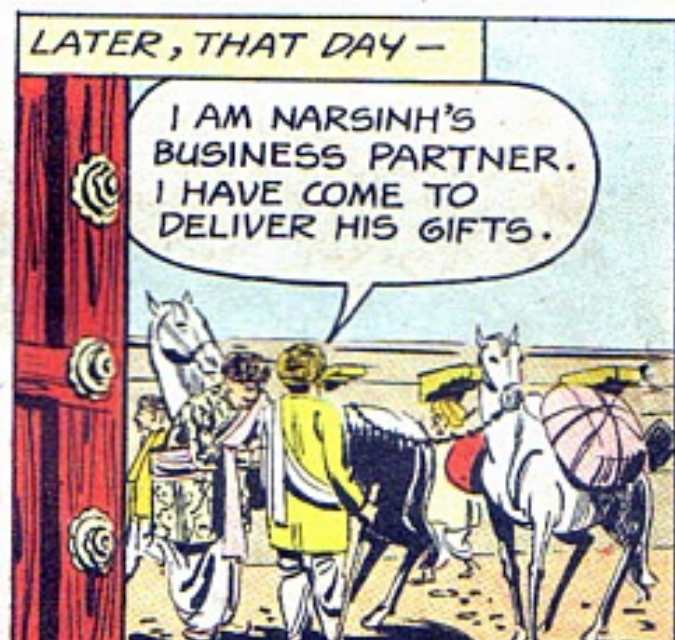
IT SOON BEGAN POURING.

HE IS, INDEED, A BHAGAT.



LATER, THAT DAY -

I AM NARSINH'S BUSINESS PARTNER. I HAVE COME TO DELIVER HIS GIFTS.



MOTHER, THIS SARI IS FOR YOU.

I CAN SEE THROUGH THAT GUISE. IT IS NONE OTHER THAN LORD KRISHNA.

THESE ORNAMENTS ARE FOR YOU, MY DAUGHTER.

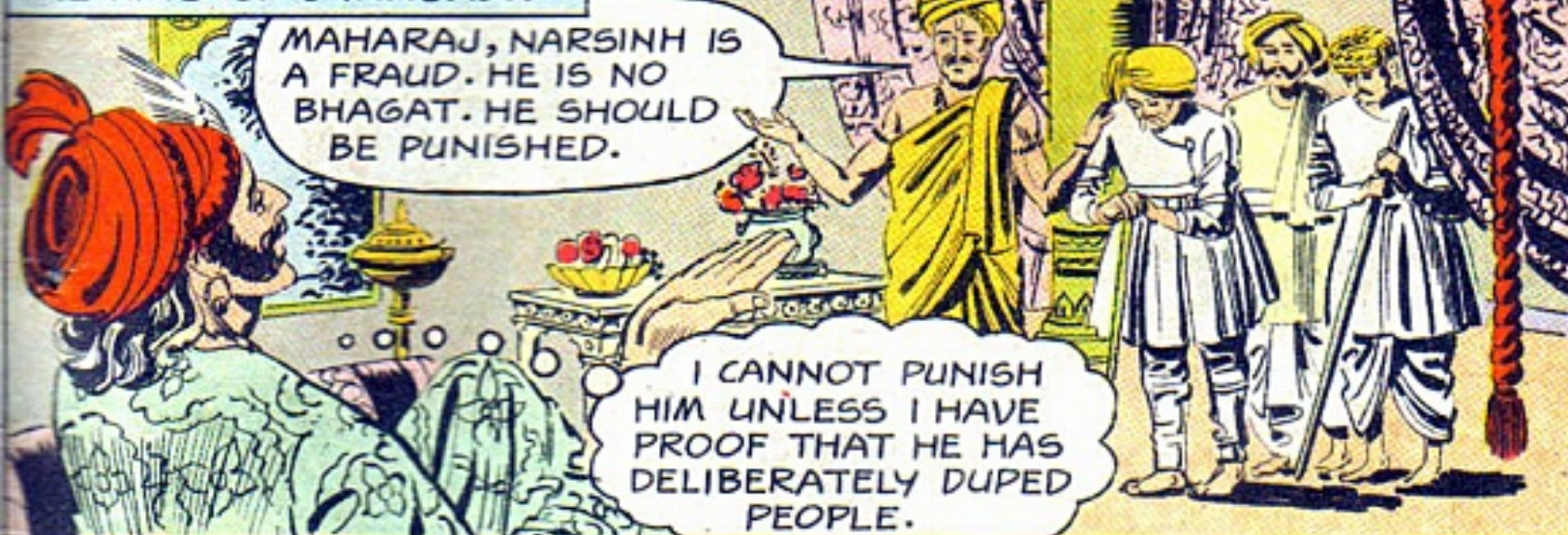
MEANWHILE AT JUNAGADH, SARANG MEHTA
EGAN SCHEMING AGAINST NARSINH.



NARSINH HAS
BORROWED SOME
MONEY FROM
DHARNIDHAR AND
HAS PROMISED
NOT TO SING IN
THE RAGA TILL
HE REPAYS IT.



SARANG COMPLAINED TO RA*MANDLIK,
THE KING OF JUNAGADH.



HE DECIDED TO TEST NARSINH'S
SPIRITUAL POWERS.



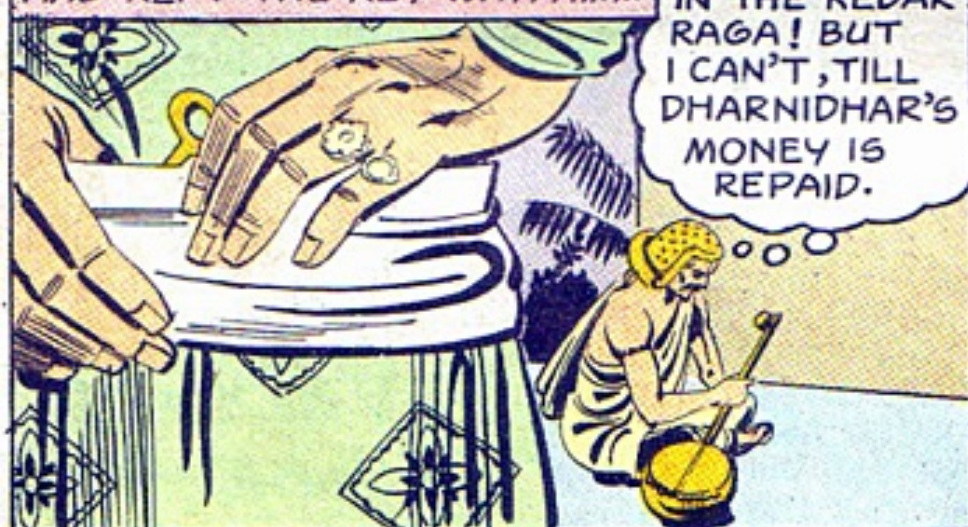
IF LORD KRISHNA
PUTS THIS NECK-
LACE AROUND YOUR
NECK, WE WILL
ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR
GREATNESS; OTHER-
WISE YOU DIE.



AS ORDERED, NARSINH PUT THE NECKLACE ON THE IDOL OF KRISHNA.



WHEN NARSI CAME OUT, THE KING LOCKED THE TEMPLE AND KEPT THE KEY WITH HIM.



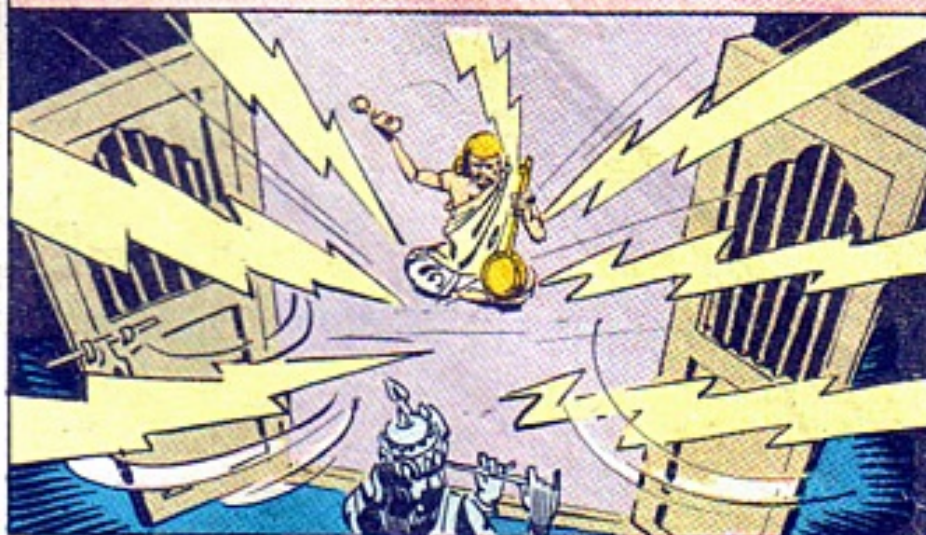
MEANWHILE AT DHARNIDHAR MEHTA'S HOUSE -



THE RECEIPT FELL INTO THE LAP OF NARSINH, WHO WAS SITTING OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

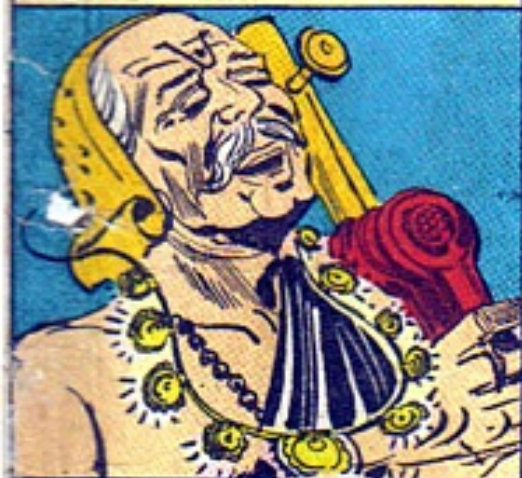
LORD KRISHNA MUST HAVE REPAID THE MONEY. I AM NOW FREE TO SING HIS RAGA.

NARSINH BEGAN SINGING IN ECSTASY AND LO! THE DOOR OF THE TEMPLE OPENED. THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT ...

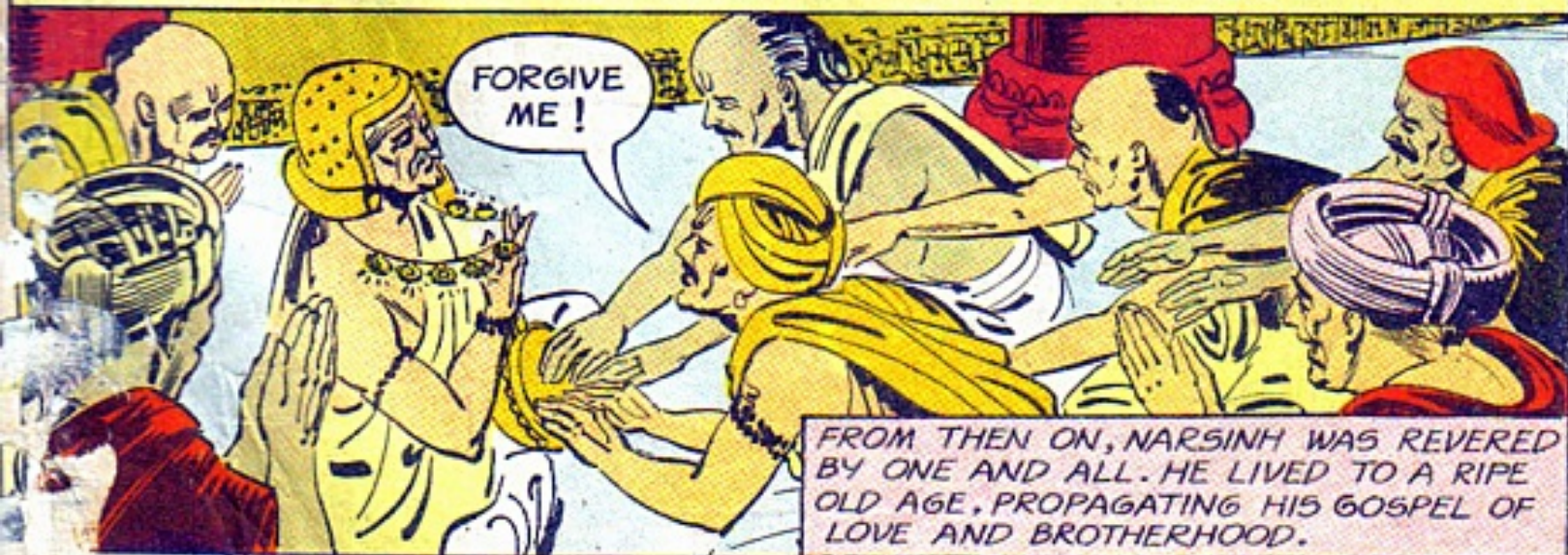


AND THE NEXT MOMENT, THE NECKLACE WAS AROUND THE NECK OF NARSINH.

THE PEOPLE WERE STUNNED AND STOOD ROOTED TO THE SPOT.



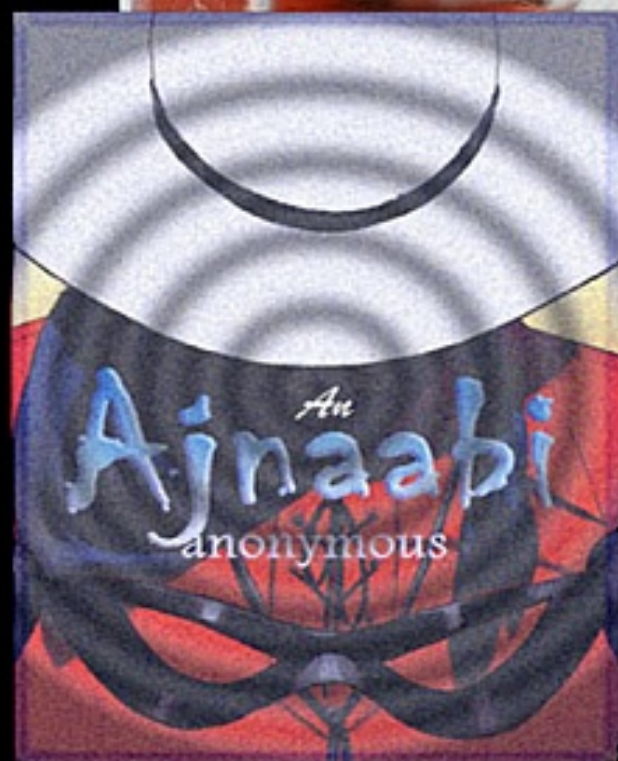
THEN THEY VIED WITH ONE ANOTHER TO BE THE FIRST TO FALL AT THE FEET OF NARSINH. AMONG THEM WAS SARANG MEHTA TOO.



FROM THEN ON, NARSINH WAS REVERED BY ONE AND ALL. HE LIVED TO A RIPE OLD AGE, PROPAGATING HIS GOSPEL OF LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD.

BEWARE

scan OR BE scanned !



MEEWOW